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MARYLAND

County Council seat set for vote

Widower seeks Praisner seat

By Eric L. Taylor
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Montgomery County residents in District 4 will vote today in a special election to fill the county council seat left vacant by the death of Marilyn Praisner.

County spokesman Neil Greenberger said the election is important to the entire county because the council has nine members, and to pass a bill five votes are needed. "No matter how many people are present."

The candidates are Mrs. Praisner's husband, Don Praisner, a Democrat, and Mark D. Pansel, a Republican.

District 4 includes all or parts of Aspen Hill, Burtonsville, Calverton, Chevy Chase, Coleville, Derwood, Foxfield, Olney, Sandy Spring, Silver Spring, Spencerville, Wheaton and White Oak.

Mr. Praisner, 76, who defeated Nancy Navarro in the April primary, is considered the favorite, said council member Nancy Kreeen, a large Democrat.

Mr. Praisner has the support of County Executive Isiah Leggett, a Democrat. There are no Republicans on the council.

Mr. Praisner, a county resident since 1947, is a past president and current member of CHILM, a nonprofit organization that provides services to disabled individuals. He also is the vice president of Calverton Citizens Association, a 1,500-resident community. He worked as an analyst, manager and recruiter for the CIA for 30 years.

Mr. Pansel, 61, of Aspen Hill, is the director of membership for Citizens Against Government Waste. His platform includes strengthening environmental policy, reducing taxes and implementing reforms to slow growth and development. He earned his bachelor's degree in political science from Vassar College.

Mrs. Praisner, 66, died Feb. 1 after complications from heart valve replacement surgery.

First elected in 1990, she was a three-time president of the council. She was last elected as a council member in 2006 and was the longest-serving current member.

"In terms of intrinsic value to the system, no one could match her. Whether you liked her or didn't like her, I think everybody respected her," Mr. Greenberger said.

He said Mrs. Praisner will be remembered specifically for her commitment to getting emergency respondents on the same channel to better organize their reaction to emergency calls and for her work on the county's annual growth policy.

"She knew a lot about a lot of things," Mr. Greenberger said. "She had this incredible knowledge of the budget and communications."

Her colleagues remember her in-depth understanding of county issues.

"There is probably no one who put in more hours on council than her," Mrs. Pansel said.

"We're still recovering from the loss of Marilyn. It'll be good to connect with a replacement, and I look forward to working with him."